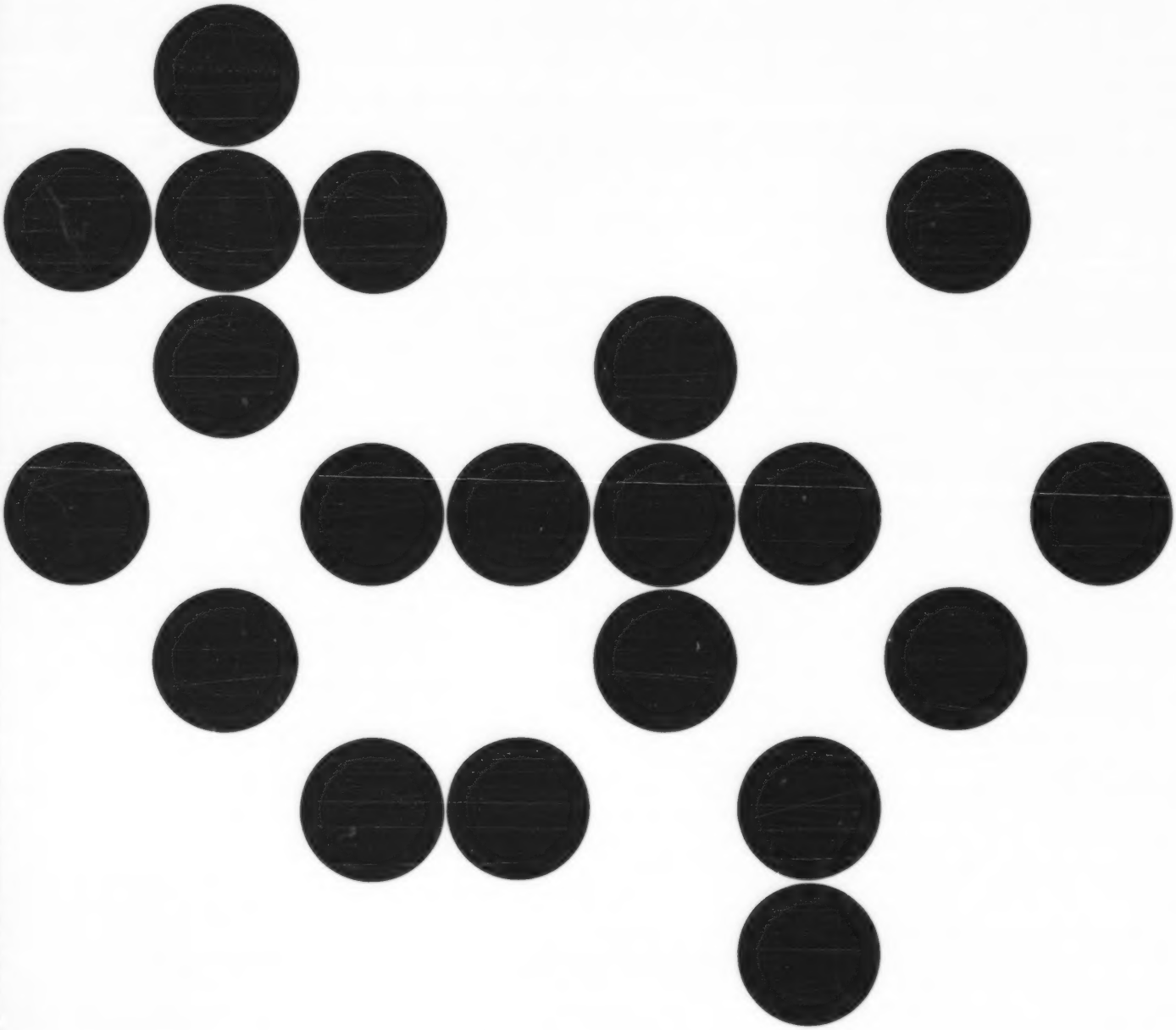
Day Care for School-Age Children

Garde de jour pour enfants d'âge scolaire



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SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE

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SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE

"...school-age child care is any single program or system of programs formally designed and organized to provide supervision and care for children between the ages of five and thirteen during those hours when school is not in session."(1)

I INTRODUCTION

The care of "latch-key" children has long been a problem for parents. More recently however, it has also increasingly become a matter of concern for child care professionals, educators, social policy specialists and decision-makers. In Canada, pre-school day care blossomed during the late 60's and for most of the 70's. For the 80's and beyond, the care of the school-age child is likely to become an even more important issue for parents, professionals in the area of social work, child care, education and recreation as well as for policymakers and employers.

At the federal level, day care received its major boost with the enactment of the Canada Assistance Plan Act (CAP) in 1966. This federal government initiative was further supported with variously named enabling acts at the provincial level. Together, these legislative developments coincided with a significant, if not dramatic, increase in the number of women participating in the labour force and concomitant increases in the supply of licensed and subsidized day care spaces.

During the 70's in particular, growth in the pre-school day care supply enabled many parents to participate more directly in the economy through employment outside of the traditional home. For many it provided an opportunity to achieve a personal sense of self-worth and a greater measure of satisfaction and fulfillment. For still others, it meant greater access to the realization of consumer goals, while for still others it meant not having to rely on social assistance payments for basic survival. The availability of subsidies for low-income families meant that at least for some, the possibility of rising above the subsistence levels of welfare was an attainable goal.

The arrival of school-age child care, in some respects, could and should have been fully anticipated; day care children grow up and become school-age children and because family employment circumstances do not necessarily change, care for the children continues to be necessary. However, it appears that until recently at least, the dominant social values allowed many young school-age children to come home at lunch and after school with keys on strings wrapped around their necks to let themselves into the house while their parents were at work, or at school, or otherwise unable to provide care for their children. The literature generally describes this phenomenon as the origin of the term "latch-key children." It is particularly these self-care arrangements that increasingly concern parents and professionals alike.

II SCOPE

With the emphasis in formal child care programs on the developmental needs of pre-school children, as a result of both real and perceived long-term benefits, growing numbers of school-age children were at best frequently integrated into pre-school programs, or else placed in family day care homes. The vast majority however, were all too often left to the vagaries of "self-care" or in the casual care of older siblings, neighbours or nearby relatives. Recent surveys in places like Winnipeg(2) and Calgary suggest that large numbers of school-age children of working parent(s) under 13 years of age, are left to their own means during some part of the non-school hours and often on non-school days, while the parent(s) are not at home.

For instance, a study on the needs of single parents, conducted by the City of Calgary, Social Services Department, in 1984, indicates that approximately 32% were using the services of formal school-age child care programs. At the same time 19% indicated they had used these services at some time in the past, while a further 41% indicated they had never used them at all. A total of 8% did not respond. In terms of the care of school-age children not using formal school-age child care programs, 22% of respondents indicated that their children care for themselves at least for part of the time. If the respondents without children and those who cared for their own children, i.e. those not working and at home, are excluded from the data, then 46% of respondents' children spend some time in self-care arrangements while the remaining 54% of respondents' children are cared for primarily through informal arrangements including that provided by relatives, neighbours, babysitters and community programs.(3)

In a study by the Alberta Committee on Children and Youth, utilizing 1976 federal census data, and projected forward for 1980, it was estimated that as many as 150 000 children aged 6-14 years were in need of some kind of school-age child care service. While data for latch-key children was not available, the study also pointed out that at the same time there were less than 1000 licensed spaces available in Alberta.(4)

The Winnipeg study, referenced earlier, is particularly instructive in pointing out the potential seriousness of the problem, in that, "...some 2700 parents of 2900 children were in violation of the Act," (Provincial Child Welfare Act). In addition to a 22% rate of self-care, an additional 21% were cared for by siblings and a further 12% were cared for by relatives, resulting in an overall non-market care rate of 60% of school-age children.(5)

At the end of 1984, Calgary had approximately 40%, or 2200 spaces, of the formally licensed or approved school-age child care spaces in the Province of Alberta. Conservative estimates suggest that there may well be upwards of an additional 7000 children of working parent(s) in Calgary who receive no formal care, i.e. care without a responsible adult(s) present, during some part of the day and during the non-school hours.

A 1983 report entitled **Toward A Coordinated Child Care Delivery System In North York**, identified a conservative figure of 13 500 children in North York, aged 6 to 9 inclusive, who needed alternative child care arrangements because their mothers were at work. At the same time, the report indicated that only 570 spaces were available in 31 licensed day nursery programs. While some other before and after school programs are reported to be available, concerns about the quality of supervision, programming and staffing were indicated, in view of their use as child care programs.(6)

In a study of school-age child care needs in Metropolitan Toronto, it was estimated that 66.8% of children in the age range of 4 to 12 were possibly in need of some kind of child care for at least some of the time. The study went on to conclude that a "very small proportion of all potentially eligible children are presently enrolled in the formal day care system."(7)

The annual **Status of Day Care in Canada** reports published by Health and Welfare Canada, have over the years consistently reported that licensed/approved spaces for the age group of 6 to 16 is in serious short supply. Specifically, for instance, in 1980, it was reported that there were 2 443 000 children of working parents in this age group. At the same time only 0.68% were enrolled in some kind of day care service. While the actual numbers have been challenged, the trend they have established reflect an urgency to the problem that is not always fully appreciated.(8)

The **1981 Child Care Arrangements Survey**, published by Statistics Canada, indicates that on a national basis 16.1% of school-age children (6-14 years of age) provided for their own care during the after school hours period. The Atlantic Region had the lowest rate, at 11.7%, while Quebec, at 18.5%, had the highest rate of self-care arrangements of all Canadian provinces. If other siblings of the school-age child are excluded from the category of those who provide care for school-age children after school hours, the national rate of non-adult supervised school-age children increases to 20.7%.(9)

In the United States a variety of studies have been conducted in order to determine the extent and scope of the "latch-key" problem. A report by the National Child Care Consumers Study indicated that in 1975 there were 29 million children between the ages of 6 and 14 in the United States of whom 18 million had their mothers in the work force. Only 9% of these children, or approximately 1.9 million were enrolled in school-age child care programs. The others were receiving some kind of informal care such as self-care, sibling-care or else generally under the supervision of neighbours.(10)

Lynette and Thomas Long in **The Handbook for Latch-key Children and Their Parents**, report on studies released in 1983, indicating that "latch-key care" is second only to the direct care offered by parents themselves. Children of working parents provide self-care in approximately one out of four cases. Estimates for the United States conservatively place the number of children in self-care arrangements at somewhere between 5 and 10 million.(11) Other studies suggest that the figure may very well be growing. E.F. Zigler and E.W. Gordon report suggestions that as many as 18 million children in the United States, between the ages of 6 and 13, may require some form of school-age child care by 1990.(12)

The scope of the problem is by no means only, or limited to the numerical dimension. School-age child care programs are frequently tied into pre-school day care centers and are too often facility orientated in their programming. Funding is generally in short supply; even more so than in pre-school programs. Age-appropriately trained staff are difficult to locate, finding suitable facilities both indoor and outdoor, often requires consumate skills at negotiation and conflict resolution. Good resource material, although improving rapidly, is still hard to obtain and even so is still mostly non-Canadian in origin.

An added impact of "self-care" is the effect it has on the child. Apart from the position that self-care is essentially a form of child-neglect, as suggested in the Winnipeg study, there does not yet appear to be a great deal of reliable research in Canada to establish a clear and unequivocal picture with respect to its impact.

In the United States, both anecdotal information and some beginning research deal with the potential impact of self-care. The anecdotal information, at the very least, suggests that the area needs to be further investigated. To date, the anecdotal information, as well as the early research provided for instance by Long and Long, suggests that children may experience heightened levels of fears which are of longer duration and they appear to be involved in a greater number of home accidents and suffer from social isolation. Further, while parents purportedly choose self-care to lower stress levels induced for financial reasons, in point of fact, the guilt which may be associated with these arrangements is more likely to increase the levels of stress.(13)

Some of the more recently published research suggests that self-care may also be contributing unnecessarily to the pressure on children to act grown up, and therefore, "...may be suffering the results of premature life structuring: lowered achievement, increased social and emotional problems, and a general distrust that adults can be expected to respond to the needs of children. This latter perception can decrease the willingness of children to be givers...".(14)

In his most recent publication entitled, **So Who Cares If I'm Home?**, Thomas Long indicates that he has begun to identify a series of characteristics associated with the negative impacts of self-care and their effect on adult development. The term he uses to describe these characteristics is the "latch-key syndrome." The characteristics he associates with the tentatively identified syndrome includes the following: "...an increased fear, a heightened sense of social isolation, a lowered sense of self-worth, resentment towards parents, and a drift toward occupations that, while they might be creative, demand less social interaction, appear to be possible associated characteristics."(15)

III PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide some background information to a discussion of the issues. In addition, the report will provide general information concerning school-age programs and some of the more readily available resources in North America. It is not intended to be comprehensive in either the issues or resources presented, but rather a guide to aid the reader in finding his or her own way. Among the issues to be considered, are those which seem to be generating the major amount of concern. These include staffing, qualifications, auspices, funding, alternate forms of care, ratios, relationship to pre-school programs, and operation of joint pre-school and school-age programs.

Further, current publications and information as well as the author's own experiences will be used in order to demonstrate the growth, development and operation of school-age child care programs.

It should also be noted that while there is an increasing body of literature available, particularly in the form of journal articles, it is only in the last few years that it is becoming available in a consolidated book form. At the 1984 Conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children in Los Angeles, many of the speakers on school-age child care noted the dearth of available information, but at the same time expressed increasing optimism at the number of relatively recent publications in the field.

Consequently, across Canada, as well as in the United States, there is an increasing awareness of the different issues involved in school-age child care. These issues include those of funding, program development, staffing, standards of care, auspices, ratios, relationship of pre-school programs, alternative forms of care, self-care and others.

IV BACKGROUND

The Second World War is generally credited for providing a significant impetus to the development of day care in Canada as well as in the United States. Because of a badly needed work force, governments provided subsidies for women with pre-school and school-age children employed in war-related industries. However, with the end of the War, funding was largely eliminated and child care programs were severely reduced in number. Day care nevertheless remained available on a very restricted basis, i.e., to those who could afford the cost of it; and, for those who couldn't and could demonstrate a need, public welfare agencies occasionally made subsidies available on a restricted basis in the form of payments for babysitting.

The period following the War coincided with the end in Canada of what had largely been an agrarian style society. The more traditional roles ascribed to the home and in particular to women, began to change. As the number of women entering the work force increased dramatically, the overall demand for day care services also began to increase accordingly.

During the early 60's both the need for and the public social policy positions of government were beginning to articulate and acknowledge the potential value of providing programs that would enable parent(s) to re-enter the work force, including any time which might be required for further education, training or upgrading. Benefits were seen to accrue to both parents and the child, particularly where parents played an active role in such things as parent support groups, program planning and implementation.

During the mid-60's provincial governments in Canada assumed increasing responsibility for the necessary legislative and funding needs of day care programs. As a result, while growth was initially slow, nevertheless, the social forces of change continued to impact on public social policy and inevitably led to dramatic growth in the early part of the 70's.

Other than as a secondary benefit, school-age child care appears not to have been a significant part of this growth, at least not in the early stages. It was not until the late 70's and the 80's that school-age child care programs became an issue. If the development of pre-school services and the current focus on school-age child care in Canada, and even more so in the United States, are any indication of things to come, then the next few years are likely to be crucial for the development of public policy and programs for school-age children. The opportunity to formulate a different focus from pre-school programs is presently still available.

V FUNDING

In 1966, with the enactment of the Canada Assistance Plan Act, the federal government agreed to cost-sharing of up to 50% of approved provincial and municipal expenditures on behalf of persons "in need" and those "likely to come into need" as defined by a test of needs/income. Day care quickly constituted a portion of the non-assistance category of this program.

In general, the full costs of subsidized day care are recovered by the combination of parent, or user fees and government subsidy. This government subsidy, or deficit is variously shared by the different levels of government such as a municipal contribution of 20%, a provincial contribution of 30% and a federal contribution of 50%. Depending on the specifics of a particular subsidy program, these percentages actually vary considerably, and in fact, on a national basis, the federal government contributes substantially less to the cost of day care than the suggested maximum 50% level.

By and large this system of funding day care, including school-age child care costs, has remained intact to the present day as the major federal participation in the costs of subsidizing programs/spaces. There are, as noted, variations in this general funding scheme in some areas of the country, particularly as it relates to the accessibility of funding, or subsidized fees, by proprietary child care programs.

In cases where the municipalities have become involved in the provision of child care services, it has generally been through the exclusive control of access to CAP, that the provinces have been able to place a ceiling on the flow of funding to these child care programs. It is only in recent years for instance, that some provinces have permitted municipalities to cost-share some of their expenditures in day care and school-age child care beyond the previously agreed upon maximum levels of funding. At the present time the full provisions of CAP for cost-sharing at maximum and agreed upon levels, are not being fully utilized.

It is important to note that the values inherent in the CAP, as well as the related provincial enabling legislation, are very much related to the anti-poverty efforts of the mid-60's. These legislative actions were supported by the belief that through sufficient investment of funds, to aid in the provision of necessary services, those who were poor would at some point be able to make a positive contribution to their own overall ability to function in society and to make a contribution to the development of the economy and the national good.(16) In other words, child care was thought to be a beneficial long-term investment in the children's and parents' future.

A partial explanation for what is frequently perceived of as a lack of adequate funding for pre-school and school-age day care may well be due to the concomitant belief that the present costs of child care exceed the gains realized from the beneficiaries of its services.(17) It is possible that this belief may well apply to school-age child care even more than pre-school in view of the level of social sanction as suggested by the tolerance of the high levels of self-care.

On the other hand, disregarding the value to parents and their children for the moment, the full economic value of day care in terms of its impact on the economy may not be fully appreciated. For instance, a study in the United States has suggested that there is a multiplier effect of 1.93 for every dollar spent on day care programs.(18) Direct subsidy expenditures for the Province of Alberta in fiscal 1984-85 for subsidized pre-school day care alone are estimated to be in the area of $50 million.(19) As a result, applying the multiplier suggests that the economic value for the subsidized component alone would be nearly double that, or a total of approximately $96.5 million. Added to that figure is the multiplied value of the parent contribution for subsidized families plus, of course, the full multiplied value of care provided for non-subsidized child care spaces.

Municipal spending on school-age child care in Alberta varies considerably. During 1985 the City of Calgary is expected to provide approximately $2 million for school-age child care services. In Edmonton, the anticipated expenditures for the school-age programs are expected to reach $3 million.(20) The total value of the other municipalities' expenditures, in 1985, are estimated to be slightly under $1 million. Assuming that the same multiplier applies to school-age child care, results in an economic value of approximately $11.58 million for school-age child care. This, again, is in addition to the value of the parent portion of the child care fee for both subsidized and non-subsidized families.

The total economic value of subsidized child care services in Alberta is expected to exceed $107 million in 1985. As a result, the full benefit of child care services cannot be fully evaluated apart from the true economic benefits of the service. In any case, the immediate and tangible economic value likely does not reflect the immediate intangible value of good child care to parents and children. Further, since there are accepted "gains" associated with day care, and presumeably also with school-age child care, the real long-term benefits for the economically disadvantaged may well be greater than is generally appreciated.(21) In addition, for children generally, there is some evidence that school-age child care programs contribute to academic achievement as a result of smaller adult-child ratios and the non-threatening environment generally found in these programs.(22) A further benefit attributed to pre-school programs, and presumably also to school-age programs, may well result from the adult friendships that such programs can help to establish and, hence, the helping and supportive relationships which develop as a result.(23)

Costs to individual parents in Alberta generally range from approximately $155.00 to $200.00 per child, per month during the school year for care before school, at lunch and after school. During the summer months the cost is generally in the area of $275.00 per child, per month during the summer for a full day's care. The parent portion of the cost is calculated on a sliding fee scale with a typical minimum fee of $40-45 per family charged to parents in receipt of the full level of subsidy.

In Calgary, for instance, approximately 85% of those on subsidy are single-parent led families. A similar percentage applies to the number of families receiving the full subsidy or, in other words, 85% of those on subsidy pay the minimum parent fee. The same distribution appears to apply to other Alberta municipalities. The result may well be, that even though available data indicates a high number of single parents utilize self or sibling care arrangements, a deterrent to the use of formal programs by two-parent working families may be the cost of care.

VI SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE IN ALBERTA

Alberta, like much of Canada saw the beginning of rapid growth in day care, including some school-age child care, in the late 60's and early 70's. The provincial legislation which gave rise to the development of day care as a social service was the Preventive Social Services Act of 1966. However, in terms of regulations governing the quality aspect of care, the controlling legislation was the Welfare Homes and Institutions Act which remained so until the late 70's when it was revised and became the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act.(24) The latter is presently the basis for the Day Care Regulation which provides exclusively for the care of pre-school children, i.e., children who are six and under. School-age child care is specifically excluded from the Day Care Regulation, but does fall under the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act.

Responsibility for the development of school-age child care was assigned to Alberta municipalities in 1980, with provincial involvement limited to the licensing of facilities and contributing to the cost-sharing of subsidies for eligible families through the Family and Community Support Services Program. The separation of school-age child care from pre-school day care was made on the basis that it was considered to belong to the category of a family support service rather than a day care or child care service.

Municipalities in Alberta have decided to participate in the provision of school-age child care to varying degrees, depending on the need and other local circumstances. The City of Edmonton, for instance, has historically provided very substantial financial and program support to non-profit, community board operated programs including both pre-school and school-age programs. These programs have traditionally provided a high quality of care with an emphasis on enrichment and developmentally focused programming.

Since the designation of responsibility for the school-age programs to the municipal government level, the City of Edmonton has continued providing significant levels of support to the non-profit school-age child care programs. It is only within the past year or so, that commercially operated programs have been able to provide school-age child care services to families eligible for a subsidy. While the community board operated programs are presently expected to meet requirements which closely parallel those proposed by the Child Welfare League of America, commercially operated programs are expected only to obtain a provincial license for operating the facility.(25) There is no obligation on the part of these operators to meet the same standards expected of the non-profit operators.

In addition, the City of Edmonton has more recently been involved in facilitating the development of self-reliance programs aimed at increasing the competence of children left to self-care arrangements. The program was initiated in response to requests from school principals faced with large numbers of "latch-key" children. Presently a number of specific modules dealing with various aspects of self-care are available for instructional purposes.

The City of Calgary, on the other hand, accepted the school-age child care program in September of 1981 with a measure of reluctance. It was felt that the distinction between pre-school and school-age child care should not have been made in terms of service delivery. However, it was immediately made possible for any program operator, regardless of auspices, to be eligible for subsidized clientele. This was done by requiring all programs to meet certain conditions with respect to staffing, training, confidentiality, criminal records, parent involvement, group and centre size, indoor and outdoor play space, programming requirements and various procedural and safety standards.

The Out of School Care Regulations were developed over a two year period and involved a public consultation process which utilized a wide variety of source material in the development of the specific requirements. At present, compliance with the regulations is regularly monitored by the City of Calgary, social services department personnel. The same staff are also available to provide consultation to existing and new operators on an as required basis. The regulations provide specific requirements for school-age child care in the context of mixed pre-school and school-age programs, family day home care and exclusive school-age programs.(26)

Other Alberta municipalities such as Red Deer, Lethbridge, Airdrie and Medicine Hat have adopted varying combinations of these two positions, largely in consideration of local conditions and need. The result is that Alberta has a range of program standards, depending on the particular municipality. Enforcement of standards also varies throughout the province, although the facility license requirement is uniformly applied in every location where school-age child care programs operate.

Formal program delivery also varies in Alberta. In Calgary for instance, the primary delivery agent is the commercial day care operator, followed closely by the non-profit, community board operated family day home programs. In addition, the City of Calgary itself also provides a significant number of school-age child care spaces. On the other hand, until the last few years at least, Edmonton's school-age child care programs were frequently located in schools and largely of the non-profit type.

Cities like Red Deer, Medicine Hat and Airdrie have also, until recently, generally followed the Edmonton model, largely limiting the program delivery to the non-profit sector. However, because of increasing demand for school-age child care, these distinctions are now beginning to break down to allow for a wider range of participants. Partly as a result of these changes in demand and the auspices of the supply, both Edmonton and Red Deer are presently reviewing their roles in this area in an attempt to determine future implications with respect to responsibility for both funding and program standards in commercial and non-profit based programs.

VII PRE-SCHOOL AND SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS

One of the more common and frequently made assumptions about the nature of school-age child care is that it is merely an extension of pre-school child care. It is further argued that therefore the programs are basically alike. After all, it is claimed, pre-school programs typically focus on the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of young children; in other words, on the total needs of the whole child. School-age child care, because it also focuses on the total child, is therefore an extension, with perhaps a bit of diminution in the importance of the intellectual development. This accommodation to the role of the school, in conjunction with an acknowledgement of a somewhat older and therefore developmentally more mature child, is frequently the full extent of the difference in the basis for developing programs for the school-age child.

While it may be true that the school-age child has had sufficient intellectual stimulation by the time he or she arrives at the child care centre shortly after 3:00 p.m., it is nevertheless not an adequate basis for operators and staff of programs to assume that little or no attention needs to be given to matters of staffing, qualifications and programming. In fact, school-age child care presents some very unique challenges which, if met, are both personally satisfying for all those involved in addition to being of considerable benefit to the child. There are many child care staff who, through the experience of working in both programs, have come to recognize and appreciate the difference between the groups of children.

The growing independence and community orientation of the school-age child considerably extends the programming possibilities to include activities that are widely based, and not necessarily restricted to a particular facility or group of staff. Combined with the need to involve the school-age child in developing his own routine of activities, the demands on staff in school-age programs are quite different than those in pre-school programs. For the older school-age child it is particularly important to be able to function with an age-appropriate degree of independence, hence the role is much more orientated to facilitating events and activities.

The literature on school-age child care is increasingly cognizant of the fact that there are some important differences between it and pre-school programs.[27,28,29] First, however, it is important to recognize and acknowledge that common to both programs is the importance of a well developed and consistent philosophy of child development and growth. This philosophy recognizes the importance of childhood and learning, and views school-age child care as an essential service in support of the entire family. While the child may be the direct recipient of the service, in some sense the parents and other family members can and do benefit too, through the support, enhancement and strengthening of their roles.

The differences between pre-school and school-age child care has a great deal to do with development and maturation. As was noted earlier, the school-age child is very much beginning to orient himself to the community. The fact that he now attends school for a major part of the day assures that he will become increasingly aware of, and interested in, his surroundings, his new friends and the new opportunities for growth and development through exploration.

As the school-age child begins to benefit from his expanding environment, he very much begins to develop a sense of responsibility, co-operation, participation and independence. The result is that while during his first year in the school-age program he may still identify with the centre and cling to the staff, increasingly the focus will shift to other activities at the school and in the community. In so far as it is possible, the school-age staff need to support, foster and encourage this increasing independence. The school-age child care program becomes the "home base."

It is these developments that make programming for school-age children in pre-school programs a more difficult matter. While it is possible to operate good joint programs, it requires not only special effort but also special space and equipment and most importantly, the shift in the role of staff from a direct supervisory to a facilitative role.

Frequently school-age children resent being treated as part of the pre-school group. At the same time, however, they can interact with younger children in a positive manner by being role models for them. The fluctuations in their behaviour also impacts the program and therefore, in order for effective joint programming to take place, staff need to be very much aware of the similarities and differences between pre-school and school-age children.

VIII SCHOOL-AGE CHILD DEVELOPMENT

The world of the school-age child becomes increasingly complex as the range of his interactions with his human environment expands. This rapidly expanding nature of his environment places a very special responsibility on the care-givers in the school-age child care program to provide a balanced combination of direction and choice to optimize the opportunities for growth and maturation.

Staff in a school-age child care program especially need to be sensitive to the physical, social, intellectual and emotional needs of children in their care. For most of the year, the children spend a substantial period of the day in schools in a relatively structured and controlled environment. Therefore, during the out of school hours, the child should be able to follow his own interests alone or with his peers.

The physical development of school-age children is undergoing some very complex changes during the six to twelve year period. These changes involve physical growth of the body structure, muscle development and sexual development. A school-age child has a very high energy level and therefore requires high nutritional food intake and adequate rest. The rapid physical growth means the likelihood of experimentation with new physical abilities is great and sometimes risky; hence the need for supervision.

The social development of the school-age child is an exciting one. As has been noted a number of times, this is the time when new relationships are explored, both with the physical and social environment. It is during this time that friends become very important to the school-age child. Sometimes the friends are of the same gender and at other times they are not. In some instances girls will wish to explore some of the things they see the boys doing, and likewise, the boys may wish to explore the things the girls do. At still other times each may resort to teasing or other behaviour whose primary function seems to be to obtain the attention of the opposite sex. Programming for this age group can be exciting simply because of the eagerness to explore new relationships. It is a time when they can begin to accept a varying degree of responsibility for themselves, for others and for the things they might want to do.

The emotional development of school-age children is also in a state of transition at this time of their life. It is a period of life when children reach out to others not just for social purposes but also increasingly to affirm their self-worth and self-esteem. As a result personal vulnerability is great and children may be very sensitive to criticism, ridicule and other negative peer or adult behaviour.

The intellectual development of the school-age child is best characterized by his interest and need to experience the "real thing." His ability to concentrate on one task at a time is much improved, and he is beginning to learn many new skills in school that can be utilized and encouraged in a more leisurely fashion without the element of competition. It is an opportunity to do new things purely for the joy of learning. Staff and the available supplies and equipment should be provided to stimulate, encourage and build the children's self-confidence, competence and self-worth as they explore new relationships and their environment.

There are many excellent resources available for the middle childhood period and the reader who is new to young school-age children is encouraged to become familiar with this exciting stage of development. Bookstores and libraries have a great deal of materials readily available.

IX STARTING A SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAM

Starting any child care program is a complex undertaking. Beginning a school-age child care program has its own unique problems, difficulties and frustrations. For many parents approaching the local school principal has been one of the first steps. In some jurisdictions such an approach has been welcomed; however, more often than not, it has been the first step in a confusing and frustrating process. In instances where the principal has been supportive, school-age child care programs have been realized in a relatively short time. On the other hand, where such support has not been forthcoming, it has been very difficult.

The fact that the school is frequently the first institution approached by parents who need care for their children is not a surprise to anyone. Not only is it a general indicator of the confidence and trust that parents have in educators, but it is a logical location for a school-age child care program. School buildings are generally thought of as public community facilities; therefore, it is a building waiting and ready to be used. The scho~ 's designed for children, is generally well equipped, has lots of outdoor space, adequate parking for staff and the most important ingredient, lots of kids.

Unfortunately, schools may be among the most difficult facilities to access for school-age programs. For a variety of reasons, perceived and some real, school boards, principals, teachers and caretakers are suspicious of school-age programs. Apart from the threat of autonomy, there are occasional problems in conflicting philosophies, difficulties in scheduling, misunderstanding of roles and rules, vacation schedules and caretaking duties. As a result, it is generally only through persistent parents or a cooperative principal or facility coordinator that school-age child care programs obtain access to school buildings.

Sometimes, in the context of declining enrollments in schools and the resulting threats of school-closure, school-age child care programs, along with day care programs, have been used effectively to increase the student population. As a result, some of the difficulties previously encountered have been reduced in scale or even eliminated altogether.

Rather than dealing with the process of starting a school-age program in detail, the reader is referred to the excellent work being done by the School-Age Child Care Project at the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. The Project is funded by grants from the Carnegie Corporation and the Ford Foundation and has been fostering and watching the development of school-age programs since 1979. Since then the Project has also produced a number of superior publications designed to help promote and develop programs for families with school-age children. Of particular interest for anyone wanting to start a program is, **School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual.** It is a comprehensive Handbook covering the entire range of issues. It is highly recommended reading.

In starting a school-age program, quality is most important, and while it may sometimes be difficult to identify every specific detail, some of its broader elements are reasonably well known and generally accepted. Not surprising, the primary ingredients are caring, mature and capable adults; the program takes place between adults and children. To be effective some formal age-appropriate training in a child-related discipline is essential, and experience in a group setting is a definite asset.

As in pre-school programs, the ratios are important particularly because they help to determine the group size. Smaller groups are better for most activities; they allow for more meaningful adult and child interaction. For some special activities larger groups can be great fun.

The involvement of parents in as many aspects of the program as possible is another potential indicator of good quality programs. In most commercial operations, parent involvement is generally limited to some volunteer activities and some special programs. However, in terms of overall quality it is desirable for parents to be involved in all aspects, all the way from helping set policies and budget preparation to hiring staff and assisting with programs wherever possible. Parent directed programs generally also provide more effective means of dealing with both positive and negative feedback.

Obviously, a quality program requires money, and a sound financial base is important in obtaining and maintaining good staff and equipment. Generally a minimum of 75% of the operating costs of a good centre will go into staff costs with the remainder available for things like equipment, supplies, excursions, rental and other operating costs. Finally, if a quality program is the desired end objective, these are the key elements in reaching a successful conclusion, regardless of space or location.

X STAFFING SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS

Staffing in school-age child care programs varies considerably, both with regard to the levels and types of training and in terms of child/staff ratios. Quality child care programs are largely the result of an interplay between appropriate training, ratios, group size and the personal suitability. As a result much of the school-age child care literature stresses the importance of having at least one person with some kind of child-related and age-appropriate training with each group of children. It is the trained staff person who in conjunction with the director should assume the primary responsibility for the care of the children and the development of the program. Since good quality programs also require effective team work, there must also be a strong element of participation by other staff members in the planning process.

The Child Welfare League of America in their 1973 publication on standards for day care suggests that the ratio for school-age children should be one staff for every 10 children.(30) Likewise, Baden, Genser, Levine and Seligson encourage programs to consider the special needs of school-age children for individual attention, times for solitary activity and at the same time sufficient numbers for group activities and games. These, and other special circumstances, may very well require even lower ratios at times.(31) In a more recent publication by the Wellesley College School-Age Child Care Project staff, specific recommendations include a staggered system of ratios, beginning with a ratio of 1:8 for 5 year olds and a 1:12 for older children.(32)

In Alberta staff-child ratio standards generally vary from that set by the City of Edmonton's standard for non-profit programs of 1:10 to that set by the City of Calgary's standard of 1:14 for all school-age programs within its jurisdiction. These ratios are fairly typical of those elsewhere in Canada; for instance, the Manitoba regulations require a 1:15 ratio for school-age children.

Typically, operator practice varies considerably depending on specific conditions. Generally, however, programs do not operate much below the suggested 1:10 ratio; operating much below this level on a consistent basis introduces the cost of care at a prohibitive level. It is therefore necessary to balance the needs of children for intimacy, personal adult attention and sufficient numbers to engage in a variety of group activities with the realities of what parents are able to afford with and without some form of subsidy.

XI ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Group based school-age child care programs are not available everywhere, nor are they necessarily suitable for all children requiring care. The need for individual attention varies not only from time to time with individual children, but will also vary from one child to another. After having spent a considerable amount of time in school, some children

need to have an opportunity for solitary activities and time for individual attention from a significant adult person. As a result, such a child's needs may preclude placement in group care for a period of time. In addition, children with special needs may well benefit from individual placements on a long-term basis.

Family day homes are frequently the best placements for children with special needs. Family day care homes typically offer a combination of significant opportunity for individual attention as well as opportunities for solitary or small group activities. Further, family day homes may also be more easily able to help children integrate into their own local neighbourhood. The special needs or circumstances of parents are often also factors which make family day care homes more suitable. The caregiver in a family day care home tends to be more flexible in regards to hours and days that care can be made available, whether those hours result from shift work or weekend work or to accommodate the periodic personal needs of the parents.

Another approach to providing school-age child care, sometimes referred to as "patchwork" child care, involves making multiple arrangements, generally restricted to the after school hours. Essentially it involves placing children in a variety of after school activities sponsored by neighbourhood, community and cultural organizations and a variety of private lessons.

Organizations such as Boys and Girls' clubs, the Y's, parks and recreation departments, cultural organizations and other youth oriented services frequently offer after school hour programs, particularly for the older school-age child. While making the arrangements can be rather complicated, it is nevertheless possible to make the necessary connections; and numerous parents regularly do.

Generally this kind of care arrangement is combined with self-care arrangements possibly before school in the morning and again during the lunch hour. On the other hand use of this kind of arrangement is very appropriate where lunch programs are available at the school and care is not required before school in the morning. These types of arrangements require a considerable amount of cooperation, coordination and competence on the part of the children involved, and it may still be desirable to have arrangements for a back-up caregiver in any case.

Still another alternative form of school-age child care is the program known as PhoneFriends. It is primarily designed to help school-age children cope with the uncertainties of "self-care." PhoneFriends for instance, has as one of its major goals "...to create a helping network to provide information and support to children at home without adult supervision after school hours."(33) Generally, the service is to reassure a child at home alone, to act as a sounding board, or to give suggestions on coping with a crisis. In a 1982 pilot project of the service, 634 phone calls were received with 47.5% of the telephone calls involving loneliness, boredom and a need to talk. A further 23.7% of callers hung-up before they could be engaged by volunteers. Other calls came from children who were worried, scared, had questions about household maintenance or minor medical problems.(34)

XII SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN IN DAY CARE

School-age child care and many school-age children have grown up with day care. As a result it is not uncommon to find school-age children integrated into programs which have been largely established and designed for pre-school children. The operators of these programs often explain that the school-age component is provided as a service for parents with both pre-school and school-age children. By both parents and operators, it is viewed as a means of providing siblings with an opportunity to play together, as a greater convenience for the parent and as a part of the continuity of care.

Undoubtedly these are important considerations. However, in operating such a dual program it is important to provide age-appropriate space, equipment, programming and activities. Also, as was noted earlier the school-age child is capable, and needs to be involved in the various aspects of planning and implementing the program. Finally, the need for school-age children to have opportunities to explore their community is generally made more difficult by participation in programs which also include pre-school children.

An additional consideration for potential operators as well as for parents, is the kind of training requirement for the primary staff person. Early childhood education training is imperative for a good pre-school program. The school-age staff person working in a pre-school program will often be working with pre-school children at least for a part of the day and perhaps even most of the day. The tendency may therefore be to select staff on the basis of pre-school knowledge and experience. Such training and experience is valuable; however, as has been pointed out earlier, good school-age child care staff can come from a variety of backgrounds. The most important consideration is that the training be child-related and age-appropriate. As a result, the training of school-age child care staff may very well be in early childhood education, recreation or some other form of youth work.(35)

XIII SELF-CARE

Any discussion about school-age child care must include self-care as one of its themes. Self-care, apart from parental care, may well be the most popular form of care for school-age children. As has been indicated earlier, there is a beginning recognition and awareness of the potential long-term impacts of self-care. In addition, there is also a growing acceptance of self-care as a reality that will not likely go away. Therefore, a part of the solution, it is argued, may well be to help both parents and children cope with the associated problems. Hence, a number of programs have been developed to help the children as well as the parents cope with self-care circumstances.

The problem of "latch-key" children is also increasingly being recognized by employers, because of the phone calls parents receive from their children after school is out for the day. In one study of three Washington-based companies, self-care was determined to be the most common form of child care. While 80% of the children in the study were over the age of 12, five per cent were 8 years or younger. The same study also reported that employees utilizing sibling or self-care also experienced higher than average levels of absenteeism.(36)

In Hartford, Connecticut, the Phoenix Mutal Life Insurance Company offered a free course to its 1900 employees and their over-nine children to help them cope with self-care. The company chose this course of action as a means of helping the parent-employee deal with the anxiety of having children at home alone. The course was developed by the Kansas Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse and is called the "I'm in Charge" project. The focus of the program is on helping parents and children talk about the fears and concerns they may have about the self-care arrangements. The program helps the participants establish rules that will work. The course has five sessions; the first is for parents, followed by three for the children themselves and is concluded with a final session composed of both parents and children.(37)

The publication, **In Charge**, has a similar approach in that it is aimed at helping children in self-care arrangements cope with a variety of situations. The book is specifically addressed to children, helping them to develop the necessary knowledge and skills for the self-care situation. Its focus is to give children the necessary confidence and competence in getting organized, dealing with a crisis, preparing meals and caring for clothes. The program offered by the book is determined to counter the negative experience of being alone, by at least being in charge.(38)

The most comprehensive publication dealing with self-care is **The Handbook for Latch-key Children and Their Parents.** The book results from first-hand experience as a principal of a school with numerous latch-key children and as the title suggests, it is really a handbook to help both parents and children cope with self-care as effectively as possible. The book provides a balanced presentation of both the pros and cons of self-care arrangements by pointing out that while in some instances children benefit from the self-care experience, there are many children who experience considerable anxiety and stress as a result of these arrangements. The difference in outcomes may well be related to the same conditions that are recognized as being associated with resilient children.(39)

The Boy Scouts of America have also addressed self-care through their publication of a booklet called **Prepared for Today.** While initially intended for single-parent families, it was quickly realized to have a wider application since it dealt with the concerns of children who were without adult supervision during some part of the day. The program attempts to instill pride and self-confidence in children through encouragement and reward in a normal Boy Scouts context.(40)

Self-care generally requires that children be prepared to cope with a variety of potentially adverse experiences and therefore the advice generally includes such things as: keep the key out of sight, know the route home, don't talk to strangers, don't tell anyone on the phone that you're home alone, don't open the door, know how to get out in the event of a fire, know how to call an ambulance, know what to do if someone is trying to break-in, and establish rules for siblings.(41) As is readily evident, the focus is on helping the child cope with a variety of potentially negative experiences. The various self-care programs attempt to minimize these negative factors by introducing an element of self-control and competence. The programs do not address the developmental needs of children; in point of fact, it may be argued that they prevent them from being addressed, recognizing that they add a measure of legitimacy to the isolation that is very much a part of the self-care experience.

The debate about self-care is by no means complete. In some areas, as was pointed out earlier, if it involves young school-age children, it may well constitute child abuse from a legal point of view. At the same time, programs designed to help children deal with self-care situations are becoming increasingly common, sponsored by organizations who have a history and demonstrated commitment to quality programs for this age group.

Given the level of public awareness, the scope of the problem, the inadequate levels of funding and shortage of programs, it may well be that providing support services to families and young school-age children through such services as telephone hot-line programs, and self-reliance training, is an unavoidable necessity for the short-term. The danger is, however, that in a period of restraint on publicly-funded programs, the selection of programs to be offered will not provide a sufficient range of choice in accordance with the needs of the children.

Another question associated with self-care relates to its impact not only on the child, but also on the parents. Earlier, reference was made to an emerging syndrome found in adults and associated with a self-care experience during childhood. Interestingly, the same study notes that some ways to minimize the long-term impact include, a positive parent-child relationship, a safe neighborhood and home, a caring adult available for emergency events, careful structuring of self-care time, parental nearness, i.e. by job location and by telephone and a late onset for self-care, i.e., not much before the age of twelve.(42)

Finally, self-care needs to be considered in the context of "social responsibility." While numbers of children in self-care were small, it may have been possible to suggest that the care of children was an individual responsibility. However, the problem is widespread, serious and even dangerous. Increasingly, large portions of the adult population are finding it necessary to work outside of the home. As a result, everyone benefits in some way or another, except perhaps the children, who are being taught survival skills, self-care, to dial 911 in an emergency and how to lie when someone calls at the door or on the telephone and there is no one else at home.(43)

XIV THE FUTURE FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE

Recognizing that the increasing attention being given to school-age child care is coming from a variety of sources, the future at this time is most encouraging. While more work can and needs to be done in determining, especially on a local basis, the extent of the problem of "latch-key" children, the general scope of the problem is well established by the available research.

The impact of self-care certainly requires further investigation. The work done by Long and Long is particularly of interest insofar as it raises serious questions about the potentially negative long-term consequences of self-care. The suggestion that there may well be a syndrome of generally undesirable characteristics associated with self-care which are observable into adulthood, requires further investigation, particularly in view of other findings that speak of advantages and parental satisfaction with self-care arrangements.(44)

The greatest challenge facing school-age child care is likely to be found in developing a wider range of age-appropriate programs that utilize available resources in the most effective fashion and which are not singularly defined as welfare services. The involvement of parents, voluntary agencies such as the Y's, Boys and Girls clubs, recreation departments and cultural organizations, employers, labour unions, churches, community or neighborhood groups, local boards of education and all levels of government can make important contributions.

XV CONCLUSION

School-age child care is coming into its own. It has grown up as part of day care and is presently looking for its own identity. The need for the services has been adequately demonstrated with thousands of children presently in self-care arrangements throughout North America. Some of the potentially negative consequences of self-care, both long-term and short-term, are reasonably well understood at this time. At the same time, some of the positive consequences of providing young school-age children with trained, caring adult persons who have sufficient flexibility to spend meaningful time with them during this important period of the day and of their life, is also sufficiently well understood that the alternative of inadequate care in any form cannot be accepted.

While innovative policies and programming are required from a wide range of voluntary, public and private participants, public support is essential to meet the full range of needs presented by school-age child care services.

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RESOURCE LIST

INTRODUCTION

In most instances, Provincial Day Care Directors or Licensing staff will have access to information concerning school-age child care. In addition, community colleges in both the early childhood education area and the recreation program area, frequently have access to resource material for school-age children. In some jurisdictions, school board staff, particularly those involved in community schools, may be in a position to provide additional information. In Alberta, school-age child care is the responsibility of the municipal Family and Community Support Services Program (F.C.S.S.); the contact person is most cases is the Director of the F.C.S.S. program.

The following resources are some of the best sources of program information concerning school-age child care in North America. They are not listed in any particular order of importance.

1. **SACC NEWSLETTER.** Published three times yearly by: The School-Age Child Care Project, a nonprofit research/action project funded by the Carnegie Corporation and Ford Foundation, Editor: D.B. Fink, Project Associate, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, Massachusetts, 02181.

2. **SCHOOL AGE NOTES: The Newsletter for School Age Childcare Workers and Administrators.** Published by: Richard T. Scofield, School Age NOTES, P.O. Box 120674, Nashville, TN 37212.

3. **THE SURVIVAL GUIDE.** Elizabeth Ams and Donna Willis, Educational Insights, 150 West Carob Street, Compton, California 90220. Publication date is planned for 1985 Fall.

4. **BEGINNINGS: The Magazine for Teachers of Young Children.** Editor: Dennie Wolf, published quarterly by: Roger Neugebauer, Beginnings Office, P.O. Box 2890, Redmond, WA 98073.

5. **CHILD CARE INFORMATION EXCHANGE: The Directors Magazine.** Publisher/Editor: Roger Neugebauer, published six times a year by: Roger Neugebauer, P.O. Box 2890, Redmond, WA 98073.

6. **KID'S AMERICA.** Steven Caney, Workman Publishing Company, Inc., New York, New York, 1978.

7. **THE KANSAS CITY SCHOOL AGE CHILD CARE PROJECT.** The Living Center for Family Enrichment, 3515 Broadway-Suite 203, Kansas City, Missouri 64111. A United Way funded Agency committed to developing cost-effective resources and options for parents with school-age children.

8. **THE GREAT PERPETUAL LEARNING MACHINE.** Blake, Jim and Ernst, Barbara, Little Brown and Company, Toronto, 1978.

9. **CREATIVE RECREATION PROGRAMMING HANDBOOK.** Strobell, A.P., et al. National Recreation and Park Association, Arlington, Virginia, 1977.

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11. **BOARD GAMES KIDS LIKED BEST.** Consumer Report, November 1981, Volume 46, Number 11.

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EQUIPMENT

The following list is not intended to be exhaustive, however, it represents a good beginning supply of equipment for a school-age child care program. Since most children in school age programs are in the six to nine years of age category, an emphasis has been placed on the equipment for this age category. Quantities needed will of course depend on the number of children expected to register in the program. Finally, since child care staff are a very innovative lot, there are at least as many other good choices.

1. **BOOKS**

   A rotation of a minimum of 20-30 age appropriate books, rotated every two to three weeks. Comic books and kids magazines should be available. Ask the kids to bring them from home once they've finished with them there.

2. **BOARD GAMES**

   The following represent a good start: Sorry, Uno, Candyland, Memory, Dominoes, Junior Scrabble, Snakes and Ladders, Probe, Spill and Spell, Scrabble, Chinese Checkers, Mastermind, Trac 4, Othello, Stratego, Checkers, Triominos, Chess, Risk, Monopoly, Clue, Trouble, Yahtzee, Crokinole, Cribbage, Bingo, Backgammon, Pick-up-Sticks, Cards, etc.

3. **ELECTRONIC GAMES/COMPUTER**

   Perhaps a bit expensive and still controversial, electronic games and computers are increasingly found in homes and used by the family members for games and other home uses. With numerous magazines including ready-to-type-and-run programs, some of the less costly home computers should be usable in an after school care center. Likewise, a very basic video system can be used to good advantage on those special days when no one else seems to be cooperating or just for something different.

4. **CARPENTRY**

   Every after school care program needs some basic tools for minor repairs. So double duty for things like hammers, nails, saws, a good vice, chisels, screwdrivers, sandpaper, a variety of sizes and types of wood screws, a drill, a coping saw with lots of blades, pliers, some paint, shellac and varnish, a good tape measure, straight edge and of course wood of assorted sizes and shapes.

5. **ARTS AND CRAFTS**

   Lots of the following. Paint, paper of many sizes and various descriptions, felt pens, glue, scissors, staples, various sorts of tapes, sharpeners, erasers, colored and regular pencils, finger paints, a variety of yarn, a chalkboard or two, starch, plaster, lots of soap including for washing, bubbles and flakes, felt pieces and boards, straws, popsicle sticks, toothpicks, clay, sculpting tools. Books for ideas about crafts that can be made readily accessible to the children.

6. **TABLE TOP TOYS**

   Pegboards, various farm and zoo animals, people, lego, Star Wars toys(?), Merlin, Simon, Perfection, magnetic letters and numbers, spirographs, fuzzy felts, puzzles of all sorts and ages, parquetry blocks, lite brite.

7. **DRAMATIC PLAY**

A good variety of make-up, dress-up clothes, accessories for males and females, utensils of various sorts, dishes and various household items including pictures, plants, etc. Costumes representing the ethnic/cultural diversity of the centre's children should also be considered.

8. **SCIENCE MATERIALS**

A variety of things such as old radios, clocks (for taking apart), magnets, magnifying glass, pulleys, electrical wire and batteries, globes, scales, aquarium, plant area (inside and outside if possible), prisms, cage for small animals, fish and tank, thermometers, kaleidoscope, a variety of seeds, bulbs, etc.

9. **SPORTS AND OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT**

A wide variety of indoor and outdoor equipment should be available including such things as bats and balls, floor hockey, soccer, paddling pool, hose, sprinkler, hockey sticks and pucks (some extra skates of different sizes), marbles, floor mats, kites, basketball, hoops, buckets and variously sized shovels, measuring cups and equipment, funnels, ring toss, ping pong, croquet, ropes, etc.

10. **MUSIC**

A record player, records, tape recorder and tapes (include a microphone), head set earphones and as wide a range of suitable musical instruments as possible.

11. **FLOOR TOYS**

Include such things as trains, cars, trucks, a variety of Fisher Price type sets, race car set, board hockey game, etc.

12. **MISCELLANEOUS**

Almost anything and everything else can fit into this category including bikes, tents and other camping equipment, cooking utensils, sewing and knitting equipment, plaster of Paris, crochet, gardening tools, etc.

The above suggested list of supplies will allow a wide range of activities to take place, however, it is still very important to consider what resources in the community can be used. Teachers, recreation leaders, community volunteers and others involved with youth can often be persuaded to make some supplies available. In addition, many parents will volunteer all sorts of "surplus" items, if only requested, especially during the start-up phase of a new program.